



# The Weekly Page

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## Pages Learn About Legislature

### Pages write bills, hold mock hearings

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. Early in the week students discussed criteria for making a legislative solution work before selecting issues to research and develop. Then they used bill templates on class computers to formulate official-looking documents in preparation for mock committee hearings on Thursday which were televised by TVW. Some topics for policy bills this week included childhood obesity, high school dropouts, medical marijuana and second-hand smoking in cars with children as passengers. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

### Tired teens: senators propose solution

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Laura Snodgrass and Gene Shin introduced Senate Bill 5123, which addresses the issue of sleep deprived teenagers. “The bill is a good one because it will help raise grades and improve test scores, as well as contribute to the general health of our children,” said Sen. Snodgrass. The old argument from parents and teachers has been, “Well, if you’re tired, just go to bed early tonight.” Scientific evidence, however, shows that a teen’s biological clock is set for going to sleep between 11 p.m. and 12 a.m. and waking up around 7 or 8 a.m. Most schools require students to start school before 8 a.m.,



forcing them to cut their recommended 8 1/2 to 9 1/4 hours of sleep by 2-3 hours. This bill requires all public high school to start the day no earlier than 8:30 a.m. Other school districts in

the nation that have pushed back start times have noticed positive results, such as more alertness during school hours, higher attendance rates, and less depression. “Additionally, with high schools getting out later, this will help keep teens off the streets between the times of 3 and 6 p.m., the peak hours for juvenile crime,” said Sen. Shin. “No extra costs are needed with the bill, which should make it a very keen idea with the community,” he added.

### Senators propose breathalyzers in bars

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Chad Anderson and Alex Seifert introduced Senate Bill 5001, which addresses the issue of drunk driving. “The bill is a good one because it will make the roads safer,” said Sen. Seifert. In



2008, out of the 521 crash deaths, 35 percent were drunk driver-related. If this bill becomes a law, all bars will require patrons to hand over their keys when they enter the bar; and in order to leave, they must take a breathalyzer test to get their keys back. “If they can’t drive home, they won’t be able to hurt anyone because of their irresponsibility,” said Sen. Anderson.

### Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: governing is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day. As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

## Cheering: a most dangerous sport



Olympia – Senate Bill 6038 was introduced yesterday by Senators Madison Doty and Christine Doan. “This bill addresses the issue of the dangers of cheerleading and will reduce the risks that

these athletes face,” said Sen. Doan. Once known for leg kicks and pom-poms, cheering has evolved into daring gymnastics stunts. The injury rate from 1980 to 2007 increased from 5,000 injuries to nearly 27,000, and two-thirds of the injuries have happened to girls in high school. “For many schools, cheering is not a sport, it’s an activity like chess club or debating; so participants are not required to follow safety regulations, and coaches are not required to undergo standardized training,” said Sen. Doty. In 2009 Ashley Burns ruptured her spleen performing a complicated cheerleading stunt, no one called an ambulance for at least 30 minutes, and Ashley, 14, died on the way to the hospital. “If schools start to treat cheer coaches like they do for any other sport, less injuries will occur because the coaches will be certified and trained in more difficult stunts,” said Sen. Doty. “That is what our bill proposes,” she said. Besides being certified, coaches will need to renew their license every two years with refresher certification courses.

## Obesity on its way to defeat

Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Addy Dinehart and Aja Corliss. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and will reduce the rising population of overweight children,” said Rep. Corliss. Current research has shown that excess weight causes many health problems and can lead to early death through heart disease, diabetes and strokes. “This bill will save the state money in reduced hospital bills,” said Rep. Dinehart. Current research has shown that health-care costs for the obese amount to one-tenth of the nation’s medical bill. Washington State alone spends \$1.3 billion annually on health care costs related to obesity. The number of overweight children and teenagers has more than tripled from 5 percent to 17 percent in the last 30 years. If this bill becomes a law, school vending machines will be required to eliminate their soda, candy,



chips, and any other foods that contain unhealthy levels of high fructose corn syrup, sodium and sugar. The food in vending machines will instead be more nutritional choices, such as granola bars, fresh fruits, and nuts, according to the lawmakers. “While it will take a little adjustment for students to make more healthy choices, it shouldn’t take long for them to see the positive health results,” said Rep. Corliss. This bill will not require any additional taxes or costs on the community or state’s behalf. “Children form their eating and lifestyle habits in childhood. Early intervention is the key to maintaining a healthy lifestyle,” said Rep. Dinehart.



## Not only coaches, but students need concussion education

Olympia – House Bill 2893 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Erin Lamos, Holly Nelson, and Charis Houser. “This bill addresses the issue of head injuries and will reduce the number of concussions in contact sports,” said Rep. Nelson. Every year, as many as one in 10 high school football players suffers a concussion. Experts say they know very little about long-term medical risks of concussion for America’s football players still in high school. Currently, athletic coaches are required to get educated about concussions, but athletes are not. This bill will require coaches to hold an hour-long concussion awareness lesson at the beginning of each season for all contact sports to educate the players about the symptoms of a concussion and consequences of continuing to play with a head injury. Everyone associated with the sport needs to know this information,” said Rep. Lamos.





### Guest speakers visit Page School

State Parks Commissioner Joe Taller, Rep. Hans Zeiger (R-25th) and Rep. Susan Fagan (R-9th) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. They spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about the branches of government with which they are associated. Pages were able to interact with the guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speakers' comments.

### Lawmakers help cheerleaders keep movin'



Olympia – House Bill 3333 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Hailey Pettit and Brittney Richards. “This bill addresses the dangers of cheerleading and will reduce the number of injuries, deaths, and trips to emergency rooms,”

said Rep. Richards. The National Consumer Product Safety Commission surveyed 100 hospitals in 2007 and discovered that emergency room visits for cheerleading injuries had jumped from 4,954 in 1980 to nearly 27,000 in 2007. Stunt-related injuries accounted for 60 percent of U.S. cheerleading injuries from June 2006 through June 2007, according to the lawmakers. “Because many schools don’t consider cheering a sport and it is not subjected to the safety regulations, coaches often don’t have the training they need,” said Rep. Pettit. This bill will require all cheer teams and coaches to be certified and to have a stunting license. Parents of cheerleaders must also take a class so they will be aware of all the possible dangers of cheering. In addition, cheerleaders will need to undergo a more thorough physical every six months in order to assess how capable they are to perform stunts and jumps.

### Hiring dropout specialist is the answer, according to Rep. Legg

Olympia – House Bill 1446 was introduced yesterday by Representative Cecelia Legg. “This bill addresses the issue of dropout rates and will lower them significantly,” said Rep. Legg. Many schools have become “dropout factories” where more than 40 percent of students leave school between freshman and senior year. Out of Washington’s 290 high schools, 22 fall into the dropout factory category. The schools that are doing the best have been hiring dropout prevention specialists. “Approximately 7,000 young students are dropping out of high school every day,” said Rep. Legg. In order to raise graduation rates, the legislator is proposing that all high schools hire a career/graduation coach for every 100 students. “When this was tried in Atlanta, Georgia, the graduation rate rose from 35.4 percent to 77.4 percent. We hope to do the same here,” she said. The bill was brought up for a vote in the Education committee, and the result will determine whether the idea stays alive for the remainder of session.



### Global warming fixes suggested

Olympia – Senate Bill 6325 was introduced yesterday by Senators Austin Karstetter, Emily Henry and Kala Brindle. “This bill addresses the issue of global climate change and will reduce the severe negative consequences we are experiencing in our state,” said Sen. Karstetter. Predictions by scientists say that by 2100, the average temperature is expected to increase by 18 degrees. “The new prediction is a tremendous acceleration of warming. We’ve got to do something about this before it is too late,” said Sen. Brindle. This bill will forbid cutting down trees for livestock grazing land and will ban aerosol cans which destroy the ozone. “Most of the reason for the Earth’s global warming is anthropogenic—human caused,” said Sen. Henry. “We are causing it, so we have to be the ones to stop it.”



## Put that in your pipe and smoke it



Olympia – Senate Bill 5200 was introduced yesterday by Senators Jake Henke, Diego Moreno-Nunez, and Connor Anderson. “This bill addresses the issue of medical marijuana and will license dispensaries for

patients with proper documentation,” said Sen. Moreno-Nunez. Currently a patient with a prescription must grow the marijuana himself or he can have one other person do it for him. The legal limit is 15 plants and up to 24 ounces of useable marijuana per patient but many can't grow the drug for themselves or don't know anyone who can. If this bill becomes law, the Legislature will authorize the licensing of dispensaries by the Department of Health and the farmers who grow the marijuana crops by the Department of Agriculture.

## Reps have plan to keep students in school

Olympia – House Bill 1002 was introduced yesterday in the Education committee by Representatives Cameron Hosking and Derick Rivers. “This bill addresses the issue of high school dropouts and will result in more students staying in school and graduating,” said Rep. Rivers. Out of 290 high schools in Washington state, 22 of them are considered “dropout factories”—schools where barely 60 percent make it from their freshman to senior year. “Every student that drops out drains our tax dollars, from welfare to prisons to Medicare. So, if we keep kids in school, in the long run we will save tax dollars,” said Rep. Hosking. This bill proposes to require high schools to hire “life counselors” to help at-risk kids follow school rules, get passing grades, and learn better communication skills. “Even though this may cost money at first, it will save us money in the long run, because it will keep kids out of jail and help them get good jobs,” said Rep. Rivers.



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## Put the “student” back in “student-athlete”

Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives



Cullen Bryant, Logan Flonex, and Colby Crawford. “This bill addresses the issue of high school sport eligibility standards and even the playing field for those schools with different rules of participation,” said Rep. Bryant. Currently all high schools must follow the basic standards set by the Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA), but any district can set higher standards. “The problem this creates is that some schools bench players with low grades, while others do not. This puts some teams at an unfair advantage,” said Rep. Flonex. The new bill sets a statewide minimum 2.4 GPA for all athletes, which cannot be increased by school districts. “Student-athletes should not be able to fail a class and still play the sport, no matter how talented they are,” said Rep. Crawford.

## Senators chomp down on childhood obesity

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Devon Eslick, Andrew Harrison, and Ellen Leeds introduced Senate Bill 5153, which addresses the issue of childhood obesity. “The bill is a good one because it will educate our youth about the unhealthy foods and show them the long-term affects of their eating habits,” said Sen. Leeds. It is estimated that one in three American children born in 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime. This prediction is based on the consumption of foods with high calorie, sugar, salt, and fat contents. Studies show that 80 percent of high school students do not get the recommended number of servings of fruits, vegetables and dairy products each day. The bill will require each school to schedule a nutritionist to talk to health classes each year. “Researchers in Finland have discovered that those children who were taught to focus on healthful fats—those found in fish, nuts, seeds, and oils from plants—had slightly lower cholesterol levels compared with those who ate an unrestricted diet.

These lower cholesterol levels would help prevent diabetes later in life,” said Sen. Harrison.



### Docs to get loan relief by helping disadvantaged children



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Tasmine Watler, Khloe Recce, and Cheyenne Greenwalt introduced House Bill 3282, which addresses the issue of uninsured children.

“The bill is a good one because it helps disadvantaged children get the medical attention that they need,” said Rep. Watler. Nearly 20 percent of children in the state are not immunized, according to the lawmakers. In order to provide medical treatment for uninsured children, the Legislature will encourage doctors and schools will work together once a month to provide clinics for children living in poverty to get free check-ups. In return, doctors will receive a three percent reduction on their medical school loans for each year they provide service. “Schools will also get something in return by having healthy students,” said Rep. Recce.

### No more second-hand smoke

Olympia – Senate Bill 6781 was introduced yesterday by Senators Miristi Devereux, Amber Stephens and Maggie Palazzo. “This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoke in cars and will lower health risks for children under 18,” said Sen. Palazzo. When children are passengers in cars where someone is smoking, they inhale small particles of smoke that can damage their lungs. Second-hand smoke contains more than 250 chemicals considered toxic or cancer-causing. The poisonous toxins in the backseat of a smoker’s care were found to be 30 times higher than the level at which an un-



healthy air alert was triggered in one study. This bill will ban smoking in vehicles with passengers under the age of 18. The senators want this to start as a secondary law to give smokers time to get use to the law. “Our state already has a law prohibiting foster parents from

smoking while a child is in the car. It makes sense to protect all children from this health hazard,” said Sen. Devereux. Previous laws like this one have been enacted in other states, such as Arkansas, Louisiana, California and Maine, according to Sen. Stephens.

### Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional and include delivering campus correspondence, helping with mailings in legislative offices, and handing out documents on the floor of the Senate and House. Initially, only males were allowed into the program. The first female pages began serving in 1937.



### Pages compete for Jeopardy win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

### Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/PageSchool>

This newsletter has been posted there.

